

Memo

To: Mayor Ashe and
Members of Council

May 25, 2026

From: Timothy Higgins
Accessibility Coordinator

Copy: Chief Administrative Officer
Division Head, Public Affairs & Corporate Communications

Subject:

Accessibility Advisory Committee - 2025 Year End Report and 2026 Proposed Work Plan
File: S-1000

The Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) is pleased to submit for Council's information its 2025 Year End Report and 2026 Proposed Work Plan.

1.0 2025 Year End Report

The AAC continues to advise on policy, planning, capital projects, programs, and service delivery to help ensure accessibility is embedded by design across the City's work, programs, services, and facilities.

1.1 AAC Membership, Training and Meetings

The AAC met regularly throughout 2025 using a hybrid meeting model that enabled both in-person and virtual participation. To strengthen continuity and accountability, the Committee implemented an action item tracking approach as an ongoing practice to continuously monitor progress regarding AAC advice and initiatives.

Member orientation and ongoing learning emphasized staying current with changes to the Ontario Building Code (OBC) that relate to accessibility, as well as emerging provincial and federal accessibility standards and best practices. This reinforced the AAC's commitment to help the city go beyond minimum accessibility requirements wherever feasible. During the fall, the AAC also previewed the 2026 meeting calendar, noting election-year impacts on

scheduling, and received general clarification on governance and appointment processes to support orderly transitions.

1.2 Awareness Activities

Canada Day remained a high-visibility opportunity to engage Pickering residents in conversations about opportunities to improve City accessibility. AAC members and strategic partners again hosted the daytime Tranquility Tent – a quiet, shaded space designed for guests who benefit from a low-stimulus environment - and coordinated member participation and public consultation regarding accessibility throughout the event.

The city advanced the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower (HDS) initiative. Council's endorsement of corporate membership enabled training and materials to roll out across facilities, with a public launch and broader business outreach planned in 2026. The Committee tracked progress toward achieving the Sunflower 80% staff training goal and looked for opportunities to align the HDS program launch and messaging with major City events.

To inform renewal of the 2026-2030 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP), the AAC developed and promoted a public survey and encouraged the use of plain language, multiple accessible formats, and response options that recognize both visible and non-visible disabilities. The aim was to reach diverse audiences with lived experience of a broad range of disabilities, and to surface local accessibility barriers and priorities.

1.3 Plans, Policies, Standards, and Implementation

The City prepared its provincially-required 2025 AODA Compliance Report based upon extensive pre-verification by the Pickering Accessibility Core Staff Team. The AAC reviewed pre-verification work performed and endorsed the submission of a "fully compliant" report which City Council subsequently approved (Resolution #880/25). AAC members emphasized the importance of ongoing staff training, consistent accessibility performance tracking, and maintaining sufficient, appropriate evidence of compliance to enable the City to respond expediently and strongly to any future Regulator enquiries or audits. In parallel, the AAC favoured integrating evolving federal accessibility standards, recent Ontario Building Code (OBC) amendments, and best accessibility practices into Pickering's municipal policy tools and the 2026-2030 MYAP, continuing the City's emphasis on proactively pursuing accessibility by design.

To improve pedestrian safety and maintain winter access, the AAC recommended steps to identify high-risk areas for prioritizing snow clearing and to coordinate approaches across jurisdictions (e.g., provincial, regional, and rail partners). These discussions arose from resident concerns about icy conditions on Pickering's pedestrian GO Transit bridge and highway entrances.

1.4 Consultation & Collaboration

As discussed above, a public accessibility survey was designed and launched. This survey will directly inform development of the City's 2026-2030 MYAP. Feedback garnered from

residents, staff and other accessibility advocates, particularly those who live with one or more disabilities, will directly inform how the city will aim to improve accessibility in its services, communications, programs, facilities, employment practices, and public spaces.

The AAC deepened its work on accessible housing. Following an informative engagement with the Accelerating Accessibility Coalition, a provincial-scoped advocacy group, the Committee collaborated with City Planning staff to pioneer a draft Accessibility Checklist for Developers intended to encourage their design teams to fairly consider accessibility best practices, sometimes going beyond mere compliance with code minimums. Members also explored incentives, education, and a proposal for an Accessibility Orientation Symposium to convene industry, municipal peers, and community advocates to increase the accessibility of residential accommodations in the city. Further planning and partnership considerations to advance community residential accessibility, including a possible future symposium, will be included in the 2026-2030 MYAP under development.

The Committee continued to collaborate with community partners to inform inclusive programming. Autism Home Base outlined opportunities for consultation, representation, and training, including prospective participation in the design considerations for the Dorsay Community & Heritage Centre and presence at City events such as Canada Day. The AAC also discussed the Pathways to Employment (P2E) initiative, a partnership of the city with the Abilities Centre. The Committee recognized the value of prior P2E placements and encouraged exploration of continuity for job seekers beyond initial work terms. It was noted that a potential 2026 P2E phase would be conditional on sufficient HR capacity.

The AAC provided input to the City's Microsoft Dynamics-enabled Digital Strategy. The AAC recommended tagging accessibility-related cases for analytics, preserving non-digital service channels for residents who need them, and introducing quick access options (such as QR codes) at facilities to improve wayfinding, access to information and reporting of accessibility concerns.

1.5 Site Plan Reviews

Municipal capital projects benefited from ongoing AAC advice. For example, for the Council Chambers renovation initiative, following an on-site tour to experience current constraints supplemented by a VR-enabled walkthrough, members helped focus the project's design on acoustics, captioning and/or sign language support, lighting and display sightlines, as well as overall wayfinding. For the Redman House restoration project, updates reflected earlier AAC concerns, including access ramp design, lighting, odour control, and septic capacity planning aligned to anticipated demand.

Facilitated by City Development Department staff, the AAC reviewed and provided advice for all site plans submitted by developers for City approval. For these private developments, the AAC often advocated for accessibility that exceeds OBC minimums. Recurring themes included increasing accessible visitor parking, widening sidewalks and examining circulation patterns, enabling ground-level access options (especially where stacked townhomes are proposed), and selecting inclusive playground surfaces and ramped entries to improve usability for children and caregivers employing mobility devices.

2.0 2026 Proposed Work Plan

The AAC's 2026 Work Plan translates the above lessons into concrete actions. The Committee will continue to champion barrier removal across programs, services, communications and facilities while supporting completion of Pickering's MYAP for 2026–2030. The City's election cycle will abbreviate the Committee's meeting calendar in June 2026; goals and timelines below reflect this consideration. The AAC's priorities and first-quarter achievements for 2026 are described below.

2.1 Awareness Activities

- Accessibility Training and Orientation for New Council and Committee Members – Ensure new Members of Council and its Committees receive timely, accessibility training and orientation;
- Hidden Disabilities Sunflower (HDS) Program – Continue collaborations to heighten the profile of and expand the HDS program through staff and volunteer training; rollout of an HDS public communications plan; and integration of HDS initiatives into the 2026 Municipal Election administration to support voters with a wide range of non-visible disabilities; and further encourage HDS adoption within the business community through support for outreach and recognition opportunities; and
- Canada Day – Continue to host the popular Canada Day Tranquility Tent to profile partner programs that support mental health and inclusion; promote the HDS program and its resources; and collect feedback to inform the development of the 2026-2030 MYAP and future accessible program offerings.

2.2 Plans, Policies, Standards, and Implementation

- 2026-2030 MYAP – Support the completion of the City's public accessibility survey and 2026-2030 MYAP.;
- Recreation Programs & Inclusive Services – In collaboration with Community Services, accessibility advocates and other accessibility partners (e.g., Autism Home Base), seek to expand innovative, inclusive recreation program offerings; embed accommodation-capture in registration; and explore a single resident profile to streamline accommodations across City services. For example, in March 2026, the AAC supported exploration of a bi-weekly accessible public skating pilot at the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex, emphasizing inclusive design, partnerships, alignment with City events, and feedback mechanisms. Further, a significant research resource was identified that will inform Pickering's accessible recreation program designs going forward;
- Corporate Facilities & Operations – Collaborate with Facilities to review practices and accountability regarding accessible power-operated door reliability. In 2026 AAC members raised recurring issues with automatic door function at City facilities and supported a motion requesting a staff review and report outlining current maintenance practices, identified gaps, and options to improve door reliability and accountability. The Committee also highlighted winter operations, including the need to keep accessible

City facility parking stalls and routes clear during snow events and to prevent snow from being piled in designated spaces;

- The AAC will maintain oversight of walkways, curb cuts, tactile plates, crossings, parks, and playgrounds, with issues logged through Digital Services for analytics and trend reporting;
- Transportation & Winter Safety – Collaborate with Pickering’s Accessibility Core Staff Team to identify high-risk pedestrian areas for snow clearing; promote multi-jurisdictional coordination (e.g., Region, Province, Metrolinx) to improve winter access at the Pickering GO Transit pedestrian bridge as well as highway entrances; and provide advice on wayfinding and safety supports. The AAC will continue to monitor winter operations to ensure accessible parking and routes are maintained;
- Parking Accessibility & Enforcement – Continue to collaborate with Parking Enforcement to simplify public reporting of accessible parking permit misuse, standardize data capture, and explore incentives for property managers to improve compliance; and
- Digital Accessibility & Data – Collaborate with City’s project team to implement accessibility tagging and analytics within the City’s Digital Strategy while maintaining non-digital service channels and introducing QR or quick-link access at facilities.

2.3 Consultation & Collaboration

- Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2026-2030 (MYAP) – Continue to promote the public accessibility survey to establish evidence to inform the MYAP. Seek to establish clear performance indicators, owners, and timelines; and maintain an evidence repository for future AODA compliance reporting. Publish on pickering.ca and promote community awareness of the 2026-2030 MYAP, once approved by Council;
- Accelerating Accessibility Coalition & Municipal Partners – Seek to expand strategic partner liaison and collaboration on accessible initiatives such as Pickering’s Residential Accessibility Checklist and a possible future residential accessibility Symposium; connect with leading municipal peers (e.g., Vaughan, Toronto) for shared learning and to seek potential co-operation; and
- Community Partners – Pursue ongoing program design consultation with Autism Home Base and program partnerships at City events such as Canada Day; continue to align Pickering’s accessibility efforts with Durham Region’s planning, as appropriate.

2.4 Site Plan Reviews

- Municipal Built Environment & Capital Projects – Continue advisory input on Council Chambers implementation, Redman House remediation, Seaton Recreation Complex & Library design, and Fire Station 5. Emphasis includes accessible parking distribution, evacuation routes, elevator capacity, pedestrian safety near emergency vehicle exits, wayfinding, acoustics, sensory considerations, and coordination with regional infrastructure projects;
- Private Developments - Facilitated by Planning Department staff, the AAC will continue to review and provide advice for all site plans submitted by developers for City approval; and

- Incenting Accessible Housing – Finalize and pilot the Accessibility Checklist for Developers encouraging standards that exceed OBC minimums for visitor parking, pedestrian realm design, ground-level access options etc., in collaboration with City Planning; seek iterative feedback from developers and integrate learnings into the AAC’s site plan guidance. Include a possible future Accessibility Orientation Symposium, in partnership with civic and industry advocates, in the 2026-2030 MYAP.

Submitted on behalf of the Pickering AAC Members:

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Mara Nagy, City Councillor

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